



NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

In 1995, the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition published the monograph, *Beyond Critical Thinking: Teaching the Thinking Skills Necessary to Academic and Professional Success*, by William T. Daly. In that volume, Daly questioned whether students in their first college year were acquiring (and/or engaged with) the thinking skills necessary for independent thought and if seniors had the critical-thinking skills needed for employability in a global economy. He made a case for teaching students independent thinking throughout their college experience and considered critical-thinking skills crucial for academic and professional success, both in and out of the classroom. The queries and arguments Daly posed in *Beyond Critical Thinking* are as relevant today as they were in 1995, especially as institutions of higher education face more public scrutiny of their practices and outcomes, as well as a need to justify the high price tag of a postsecondary education. Indeed, a growing number of scholars claim students do not develop in college the critical-thinking, reasoning, and writing skills they will need in the world of work (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Gardner & Perry, 2012; Hanneman, & Gardner, 2010; Hart Research Associates, 2010; Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997). This volume continues where *Beyond Critical Thinking* left off and expands the discussion on critical thinking.

The authors in this book explore the landscape of critical-thinking skill development and pedagogy involving a range of students in diverse settings. While the main audience is faculty members, campus partners inside and outside the classroom (e.g., librarians, support personnel and staff, administrators) can make a difference in teaching these skills to students, and full campus participation can enhance student learning. The chapters and case studies herein encourage faculty and higher education professionals to attend to issues of critical-thinking skill development in whatever context they find themselves engaged with students.

Foundations for Critical Thinking also offers practical strategies to help instructors with the double challenge of (a) developing meaningful content to teach these skills and (b) selecting from the myriad of constantly changing technologies available for content delivery. A successful pedagogy will move critical-thinking skills beyond the classroom into everyday life, engaged citizenship, and the world of work.

The volume is divided into two parts: (a) foundational chapters and (b) case studies. Part I opens with an adaptation of Daly's original 1995 essay, which lays out a historical context, establishes the need for critical-thinking skill development in higher education, and offers a definition of critical thinking (i.e., independent thinking) on which the volume rests. Barbara Tobolowsky then presents the theoretical foundation for critical-thinking theory in Chapter 2. She describes and synthesizes models, frameworks, and taxonomies of the major contributors to the field of critical thinking and shows how an understanding of these theoretical concepts can influence practical classroom pedagogies.

Christine Harrington in Chapter 3 continues Daly's conversation on the elements of independent thought and considers the developmental aspects of critical thinking, describing the cognitive, emotional, and social factors involved in advancing this skill. She provides an overview of the theoretical and empirical research on higher-level thinking skills, a model of the critical-thinking process, and teaching and learning strategies that facilitate growth in this area. In Chapter 4, Marc Chun echoes Daly's argument for faculty retraining and discusses professional development and the pedagogical challenges of teaching students critical-thinking skills. Drawing from three different paradigms of professional development—the how, who, and what—Chun explores faculty members' knowledge and skills, networks and social capital, and understanding of what the work is of enhancing students' critical-thinking skills. He supports his thesis with specific institutional examples.

Chapter 5, the last of the foundational chapters, moves the dialogue forward on testing for independent thought as Trudy Bers tackles the various approaches of assessing students' critical-thinking skills. She examines the reasons for doing assessments, the need to define critical thinking at the institution level, and the pros and cons of homegrown versus national assessment tools. Bers also offers practical guidelines to help institutions develop a critical-thinking assessment plan.

Part II begins with a brief recap of the highlights of the foundational chapters and expands on Daly's suggested strategies for teaching critical-thinking skills by introducing eight case studies. Drawn from a range of U.S.

colleges and universities—both public and private, two-year and four-year—the studies describe initiatives involving a diverse group of students across various disciplines, with content delivered through an array of innovative strategies and mediums. Cases are arranged in alphabetical order and address

- critical-thinking assessment instruments—California State University, Monterey Bay and The Community College of Baltimore County;
- professional development promoting critical-thinking pedagogy—Richard Stockton College of New Jersey;
- dedicated critical-thinking first-year seminars or programs—Virginia Tech, University of South Carolina Aiken, and Washington State University;
- undergraduate research with a critical-thinking focus—Purdue University; and
- graduate internships highlighting critical-thinking skills—Seton Hall University.

This book is an ongoing conversation regarding the state of students' critical-thinking skills in higher education and beyond. It attempts to balance empirical evidence about higher-order thinking development with practical classroom and institutional suggestions and underscores the challenge of both defining critical thinking and putting it into practice. We hope that you, the reader, by joining this conversation, will find useful information to sharpen your critical-thinking teaching skills, which, in turn, will prepare your students to face the challenges of a global economy as well as lead creative, productive, and fulfilling lives.

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